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THE IDEALS IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT.¹

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IT HAS seemed to some superficial observers that organized labor's ideals consist of nothing more than higher and higher wages, shorter hours of labor, more and more control, and additional rules and regulations affecting employment. Perhaps the ideals which have guided the trade-union movement of our country are not generally known to the public because trade-unionists have been more busily engaged in working for their attainment than in crystallizing them into set phrases. In discussing labor's ideals, or the ideals of any other group, it must be borne in mind, that human activities are influenced by more than one motive and that it may be possible to lose sight of the ideals which have influenced men because other motives may also have actuated them.

We justly honor and approve of the ideals of freedom and independence which influenced the American colonists and inspired them during the period of the Revolutionary War, yet without doubt, some of those who were genuine patriots did not lose sight of the broad acres they might be able to secure should the effort for independence succeed, or the public offices which they might hold. These motives, however, if they existed, did not necessarily dim the high ideal for which they risked their fortunes and their lives.

It is my desire to convey an understanding of what underlies the efforts and tendencies of trade-unionism so that you may discover the ideals which guide organized labor and influence it more profoundly than anything else.

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Brotherhood.

Humanity is under heavy obligations to trade-unionism because of the ideals which it has established, and in particular, our country owes a great debt of gratitude to the trade-union movement of England for the special service it rendered to our Nation during the darkest days of the Civil War. The instance I have in mind unfortunately, like many other great deeds of organized labor, has been passed over lightly or remained unmentioned by our historians. It will be remembered that early in the Civil War cotton was declared contraband of war by our Government and that this action produced far reaching results in the cotton spinning and weaving industry of England. As the war progressed, mill after mill was forced to shut down and thousands of cotton operatives were thrown out of employment.

English bankers and mill owners united in demanding that the British Cabinet should recognize the belligerency of the Confederate States and all of the methods which capital can set in motion were utilized to bring pressure upon the British Cabinet. The plea was made that Britain's great cotton industry would be destroyed, the invested capital lost and labor suffer as never before. It was known that the British Cabinet was divided upon the question. In time blockade runners anchored in the Mercy, their holds filled with contraband cotton. Had the Government permitted the unloading of this cotton, it would have been forced to recognize the belligerency of the Confederate States. It was at this time that English trade-unionists declared themselves so definitely and so determinedly that the British Cabinet hesitated and finally in face of a rising public opinion, determined to continue its refusal to give recognition to the southern belligerents.

From the beginning of our Civil War, the British unions had taken a lively interest in the principles involved. They recognized that one of the vital questions was that of the freedom of labor. Mass meetings were called throughout the land at which the question was discussed. One of these,

a mass meeting of trade-unions, held in St. James hall in London was addressed by John Bright, and a few lines from his oration will help us better to understand the trade-union sentiment.

"You wish," he said, "the freedom of your country, you wish it for yourselves, you strive for it in many ways . . . impartial history will tell that when your statesmen were hostile or coldly neutral, when many of your rich men were corrupt, when your press which ought to have instructed and defended was mainly written to betray, the fate of a continent and of its population being in peril, you clung to freedom with an unfaltering trust that God in his infinite mercy would yet make it the heritage of his children."

Throughout England the trade-unions were aroused, and none more than in Lancashire where the closing down of cotton mills had brought untold suffering upon the workers. These trade-unionists were determined that the Government of the United States should be sustained in freeing the slaves; they were determined that contraband cotton should not be landed on English soil, and the demonstrations of their determination were so vigorous, that the Cabinet and Parliament were forced to take notice. These trade-unionists realized that the success of their efforts meant continued privations and sacrifices on their part, and yet it was with this knowledge that they served notice upon the British Government that the introduction of contraband cotton would mean a strike on the part of all of the cotton operatives. These trade-unionists in their hour of self-sacrifice were guided by something which we are justified in accepting as the highest ideal.

Soon after I became a member of my local union and before I had any adequate grasp of the industrial problems or understanding of trade-unionism, it was my good fortune to come into contact with some of the veterans in our movement. One Sunday I went to Boston to secure advice from John F. O'Sullivan, who for many years in addition to his newspaper work, was actively engaged in organizing and assisting the trade-union movement in Massachusetts. Shortly after reaching his home, another man entered and

I was introduced to Frank E. Foster, one of the most brilliant laymen whom the American trade-union movement has produced, and while we were talking another rap came at the door and in a moment I had the pleasure of meeting Henry Abrahams who for twenty-five years has been Secretary of the local Cigar Makers' Union and who has served the Central Labor Union of Boston as its Secretary for seventeen years.

It seemed strange to me to find an Irishman and a Roman Catholic, a descendant of the old New England stock and a Protestant, and a man whose ancestors had heard the thunders of Mt. Sinai, greet each other as though they were members of an affectionate family and then devote an afternoon to the discussion of ways and means for assisting the wage earners of Massachusetts to secure legislation which would prevent injustice from being done to workers, male and female, union and non-union alike. I was able to understand that something which these men had acquired as trade-unionists had enabled them to feel that there was no division between them because of ancestry, race, religion or political affiliations, but that in their interest in each other and their interest in all those who toil, they were as one.

The public gathers its limited knowledge of trade-unionism mostly from newspaper items and editorial comment, and particularly when some acute industrial dispute is in progress. The public knows but little, if anything, about the every day activities which are carried on year by year. Practically all trade-unions have a sick committee who not only visit sick members and attend to their wants, but who in addition see that proper comforts and necessities are provided. The newspapers seldom tell of the beds endowed by trade-unions in the hospitals of our cities. The public is unaware of the enormous sums of money contributed voluntarily by trade-unions locally for the purpose of assisting the distressed of their own and other organizations.

What is implied by these activities? Is it not that the trade-union movement has brotherhood as one of its ideals,

brotherhood so broad and so deep that it obliterates the lines of nationality, race, creed, politics? Brotherhood which extends without reservation to all of the toilers of the world? The space at my disposal will not allow me to present the unbounded material evidence which indicates the ideal of brotherhood which we hold, but I cannot pass without calling attention to some evidence with which you should be made familiar.

For many years the members of the Typographical Union have maintained a home in Colorado Springs, where without cost, members afflicted with tuberculosis and those who have lost their health are given all of the care which skilled physicians can supply, a home where comfort and kindness surrounds each inmate like sunshine falling upon the flowers. The Pressmen's Union maintains a similar institution in Rogersville, Tennessee. Many of our Unions pay out enormous sums each year in sick and death benefits to their members. The International Molders' Union of North America up to December 31st of last year had paid out \$4,128,377.70 to its members in sick, death and disability benefits. Last year the Unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor paid out to their members \$3,482,842.59 in death, sick, traveling and unemployment benefits, and this sum does not take into account the enormous amounts paid out to members from local treasuries.

Trade-unionism in America is international. The boundary line to the north does not exist so far as our unions are concerned. The delegates from Canada and the United States meet as members of but one organization. They have but one trade-union Constitution; they have but one set of officers; there is but one treasury into which their dues are placed, and so far as their activities as trade-unionists are concerned, they are the members of but one organization.

But in a still broader sense the American trade-union movement is international, for it is a part of the International Federation of Labor which includes the trade-union organizations of America and Europe. These conditions

serve to indicate the progress which the trade-unionists of the world have made toward their ideal of brotherhood.

Education.

If we could examine the constitutions of those trade-unions representing skilled or semi-skilled trades, we should find them containing provisions for the education of apprentices. Some, we should discover, provide that the apprentice after a certain period must be placed at work between two journeymen, so that he can have their assistance in qualifying himself as a craftsman. We should find other organizations providing for the technical education of apprentices. Again we should discover local efforts, such as that in Chicago, through which some of the unions, the Carpenters for instance, have made special provisions for the education of their members, as well as the apprentice, in the theory and practice of their craft.

Some of the International Unions finding that no other satisfactory medium existed have established schools of their own, one of the best known being that organized by the Typographical Union, where through a correspondence course the members are taught the theory and art of their important craft. The Pressmen's Union has established a school at its headquarters, and members from all over the United States and Canada go to Rogersville, Tennessee, to increase their proficiency and acquire a broader knowledge of their trade. During the winter months, many local unions hold courses of lectures for the education of their members.

For reasons which it is unnecessary to discuss at this time, the trade-union movement of the United States has never been given the degree of credit to which it is entitled, for the prominent if not predominant part which it played in the establishing of our public school system. But a few years ago, the wage earner's child was practically a charity pupil, the opportunities for an adequate education being confined almost exclusively to the well-to-do. The history of trade-unionism in this country from 1825 to 1835 is filled

with evidence that the trade-unions of that period were carrying on a tremendous campaign, which had for its purpose the establishing of a public school system, supported and directed by the State, which would guarantee to every wage earner's child the opportunity of securing at least an elementary education.

At a mass-meeting of trade-unionists held in New York City in December, 1829, the following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved: That next to life and liberty, we consider education the greatest blessing bestowed upon mankind.

"Resolved: That the public funds should be appropriated to a reasonable extent for the purpose of education upon a regular system that shall insure the opportunity to every individual of obtaining a competent education before he should have arrived at the age of maturity."

In September of the same year, a mass meeting of trade-unionists in Philadelphia adopted resolutions of like import, the preamble of which read:

"No system of education which a free man can accept has yet been established for the poor, whilst thousands of dollars of public money have been appropriated for colleges and academies for the rich."

At a trade-union meeting held in Boston in 1830, it was resolved:

"That the establishment of a liberal system of education obtainable by all should be among the first efforts of every law giver who desires the continuance of our national independence."

And shortly afterwards the general trade-union movement of Cincinnati issued an appeal to the West stating that their efforts would be directed toward elevating the condition of the workmen and obtaining a national system of education. The trade-unions have been foremost in working for the passage of legislation establishing free text books, and one of the prime motives which has led to extended trade-union activities for the prevention of child labor has been the intention that the children of the poor should secure at least an elementary education before facing the problems of life.

But the trade-unions go farther than this in their efforts to educate their members. Their literature includes the

discussion of civic problems, civic duties and responsibilities. Their publications abound with articles dealing with economics, sociology and industrial history. Continual efforts are made to teach every member those things connected with self government which are essential to every citizen. No group in the community has realized more keenly that education is essential to their welfare and that without education their ideals are unattainable. Trade-unionists look upon education in its broadest sense as one of the corner stones upon which the structure of trade-unionism is erected.

Education then in its truest and broadest sense is one of the ideals of labor, and as an evidence that this is so today let me quote a few sentences from the report of the Committee on Education which was unanimously adopted at the convention of the American Federation of Labor in San Francisco in 1915:

"Education," the Committee reported, "is necessarily the foundation of any republic. Education is necessary to the perpetuity of any republic. It is therefore the essential duty of this Republic to guarantee every child an adequate education. Everybody believes in education. Differences arise not upon its value, but upon the questions of what a true education should consist; who should be educated; how far and by what methods they should be educated, and what persons should conduct such education.

"Education should include whatever we do for ourselves and whatever is done for us by others, and for the express purpose of bringing us nearer to the perfection of our nature. In its largest conception education should comprehend even the indirect effects produced on character and on the human faculties, by things by which the direct purposes are different, by law, by forms of government, by industrial arts, and by modes of social, economic and civic life. Education should comprehend the culture which each generation gives to those who are to be its successors, in order to best qualify them for at least keeping up, and if possible for raising the improvement of humankind which has been attained."

The Standard of Living.

It may appear to those who have not seen beneath the surface, that the trade-union ideal is, "more and more,"—higher and higher wages, shorter and shorter hours of labor, more control in industry and additional rules and regula-

tions affecting labor. It has even been held that the wage earner in securing an advance in wages is in effect acquiring what the stockholder secures when dividends are increased.

But what we must understand if we are to grasp the trade-union ideal is the trade-union viewpoint. What is it that the trade-unionist aims to secure through an advance in wages? What do shorter hours of labor mean to him, and why does he struggle so persistently and courageously to secure both? What are wages? What do they mean to the wage earner?

They are not so many dollars and so many cents,—they are the man's life, they are the factors which determine what measure of decency, of comfort and of opportunity the wage earner will have in this life. The amount of these wages determines whether the home shall be a back room in a crowded tenement district or whether it will be a separate dwelling surrounded by pure air and sunshine and conducive to health and comfort.

These dollars and cents which come in the weekly pay envelope determine the quality and the quantity of the food which shall enter the home. They determine the comforts and conveniences and opportunities which the wage earner's family can enjoy. They determine whether his body shall be nourished and vigorous or whether it shall be underfed and weakened. These wages determine still more,—they determine the physical, mental, and moral standards of the overwhelming majority in all of our industrial centers. If there is anything in the realm of human activities which has been uncontrovertibly demonstrated by scientific investigation during recent years, it is that wages profoundly influence physical and mental standards.

The vital statistics of both Europe and America demonstrate that the home environment and the quality of the food largely determine the physical and mental characteristics of the toilers and determine also the degree of vitality with which their children enter into this world.

A recent federal investigation in Montclair, New Jersey, indicated that the average infant mortality was 84 per

thousand; but in the homes where lower paid workers lived, the rate was 130 per thousand; that where the income to the family was \$12 per week the death-rate was twice as large as where the income was \$23 or more. And analyzing still further it was found that where the fathers were business or professional men the infant mortality was but 41 per thousand. Among the higher paid workers the death-rate rose to 74 while, in the families of the less skilled and low paid, the infant death-rate rose to 101.

In a residential ward of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where comfort and wealth abound, the infant mortality was but 50 per thousand, while in the tenement district where the lower paid workers were forced to live, the death-rate was 271 per thousand. The report of the medical officer of Finsbury, London, for 1906 shows that the death-rate of adults in the one room tenements was 39 per thousand, while in the four room tenements and upwards it was but 16.4 per thousand. This same report also indicated that the infant mortality in the one room tenements was 211 per thousand while in the four room tenements it was reduced to 121. In the inquiry made by the Local Government Board of London in 1910, it was found that the death-rate was 15 per cent greater in back to back houses built in long rows. Statistics compiled in England some seven years ago indicated that the children of the lower paid workers at sixteen years of age weighed nineteen pounds and a half less and were three and three-quarters inches lower in stature than the children of the well-to-do.

What do wages mean to the worker? They mean his very life, the vitalizing quality of the blood that flows through his veins and nourishes his body, the degree of vitality with which his children shall enter the world, they determine his physical and mental welfare in a predominating manner.

Why does the trade-unionist struggle to secure a shorter work day? Let the trade-unionists speak for themselves! They desire a shorter work day among other things so that there may be opportunity for leisure and recreation. They

desire to terminate each day's labor with sufficient vitality left to enjoy the society of their fellow men, to study and to better prepare themselves for the problems which face them as wage earners, to enjoy some of the blessings which the Almighty has so bounteously spread at every hand.

The American wage earner has known from practical experience what it meant to labor from sun to sun; what it meant to give most of the waking hours to hard manual toil; what it has meant to return home so tired, so exhausted from the day's labor that all their being cried out for rest. The trade-unionist has learned that housing conditions, the quality and quantity of the food, the sanitary conditions of the shop, wages and the hours of labor not only affect his physical well-being and reflect themselves in his offspring, but that they also very largely influence his length of life.

I know of no statistics more striking or more convincing of this fact than those presented by the Cigar Makers' and the Printers' Unions from their records of death benefits paid to members. In 1888, 51 per cent of the union cigar makers died of tuberculosis, in 1911 this had been reduced to 20 per cent. In 1888, the average age at death of members of this Union was 31 years, 4 months and 10 days; in 1911 the average age at death had been increased to 50 years, 1 month and 10 days. In 1900 the average age at death of members of the Typographical Union was 41 years and 3 months, and in 1915 it was practically 50 years and 11 months. During these periods the eleven, ten and nine hour day had been displaced for the eight hour day, sanitary conditions had been established in the shops, and the wage-rate had been considerably advanced, in some cases being almost doubled. Wages and hours of labor and the conditions which they established had reduced deaths from tuberculosis over 50 per cent. They had lengthened the average life of union cigar makers 19 years and had lengthened the average life of the printers over 9 years.

It is because of these and similar facts that the trade-unionists see something more than dividends in wages, see

their very life and that of their descendants determined by the money in the weekly pay envelope and profoundly influenced by the hours of labor during which they are called upon to toil under modern industrial conditions. The trade-union movement believes that man was made for something more than mere labor, eating and sleeping. They believe that opportunities for self development are as important as labor and that unless the wage earner is afforded opportunities for recreation and self development that the standard of the mass of our people will go downward and backward instead of upward and forward.

The term I am about to use may not adequately describe the ideal but for the present let me call it the ideal of a standard of living—the ideal which the trade-unionist has in mind when he endeavors to increase his earnings and shorten his hours of labor. The trade-unions believe that childhood should be dedicated to growth, play, and education, youth to character building, and manhood to the development of the highest qualities of citizenship. The wage earners' standard of living, which rests so largely upon the wages received and upon the hours of labor, determine the physical, mental and moral foundations of the masses upon which the structure of our American institutions must rest.

The masses of those who labor in our industries constitute the foundation upon which our American institutions are erected and the trade-union ideal aims to make this foundation deeper, broader, more secure than it ever has been in the past, by continually elevating and advancing the wage earners' standard of living through higher wages and shorter hours of labor.

Industrial Democracy.

There is but one more ideal—which I desire to place before you at this time, and this is the ideal of freedom. Human freedom. Freedom in the industries. Democracy in the government of industry equivalent to democracy in the government of our country. No ideal has urged organized

labor forward more energetically than that of industrial freedom. The trade-unionist's ideal is the full application of the principles and mechanisms of democracy in the industries and the relationship of employer and employe. Freedom is essential to the workers' development and the trade-unionists can see no practical way of establishing industrial liberty except through the methods of industrial democracy. Labor's ideal is freedom,—freedom to work out its own salvation. Brotherhood and education are essential ideals, but without industrial freedom it would be impossible to achieve the ideals of a steadily progressing standard of living.

Since the dark ages there have been three great struggles for the ideals of liberty. One was for religious freedom, the right to worship the Almighty according to the dictates of one's conscience, and some of the bloodiest wars which history records were fought for liberty of conscience and the right to worship the Almighty as men pleased.

But liberty of conscience was not enough. While one set of men had it within their power to determine the laws under which others must live, men could not develop as they should and tyranny flourished. And so other wars were fought, thrones were overturned and dynasties passed away, in the struggle which men made for the right of political freedom, the right to have their voices count in the making of the laws under which they must live.

And while these contests were being waged, labor passed from slavery to serfdom, serfdom to peonage, and peonage to freedom, but the freedom accorded them in the industries was not that same quality or degree of freedom which was theirs in religious and political activities. The wage earner is not industrially free, cannot be industrially free, so long as employing capital by itself, and without let or hindrance, determines the terms of employment and the conditions of labor. And so the trade-union movement has exerted itself in the past, has made sacrifices, is making them today, and will continue to make them, will continue to use its efforts without ceasing, so that there may be

established that condition where government or regulation in the industries like the government of our country shall exist only by and with the consent of the governed.

The trade-union ideal is equality of rights and opportunities for employer and worker alike, equality before the law, equality in daily practice, equality of rights and opportunities and responsibilities at all times, and under all circumstances. We should hold that any people who would allow themselves to be governed by others without protest, or who would waive their rights to a voice in determining the laws under which they should live would be servile and unworthy, and we are equally justified in holding that workers who would be willing to have their terms of employment and conditions of labor determined wholly by the employers, or who should be forced to work under these conditions where they were not allowed a voice, would be servile, the employer would be a master and the worker would not be a free man in the full sense of the term.

The ideals of brotherhood, education, a standard of living, and industrial freedom animate trade-unionism and it must be apparent that to the degree that these ideals are realized, to that degree the quality, physical, mental and moral, of the masses of our people in the industries will be determined. The ideals have steadily guided labor, which have shone like a beacon light while labor has been tossed by the storms which sweep over our industrial seas. They are the ideals which have inspired men to devote their lives to the trade-union movement with the same zeal, enthusiasm, devotion and self-sacrifice which marks those who have some higher purpose in life than their personal comfort and self interests.

It is these ideals of trade-unionism animating the army of organized labor which hold out the brightest prospects for the future of our social structure and which give assurance that trade-unionism is a constructive force, accomplishing for labor what no other institution has been able to achieve.

JOHN P. FREY.

CINCINNATI.